

# Historical Souvenir *of the* VALLEY *of the* GENESEE

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*Address by Elon Huntington Hooker,  
President of the Society of the Genesee,  
on "Memories of Carthage:  
Traffic on Early Waterways"*

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SOCIETY OF THE GENESEE

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HISTORICAL SOUVENIR OF THE VALLEY OF THE GENESEE



## FOREWORD

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*Since the last reunion of the Society of the Genesee an historic assemblage took place in Rochester. On June 17th last, with appropriate ceremonies, a bronze memorial tablet, erected upon a quartzite boulder base near the new Veterans' Memorial Bridge, was dedicated to mark the site of Carthage. The State of New York, the City of Rochester, the University of Rochester, the Rochester Historical Society, Irondequoit Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, and descendants of the founders participated in the program.*

*On that occasion Elon Huntington Hooker, President of the Society of the Genesee, delivered an address on "Memories of Carthage: Traffic on Early Waterways", in which he turned back the centuries and painted a picture of Rochester's early beginnings that immediately became a treasured part of any collection of Rochesteriana.*

*A descendant of pioneers in the Genesee Valley and a true embodiment of their finest qualities of mind and heart, Mr. Hooker has a rare skill for endowing historic events and facts with an atmosphere of romance and realism. In his recital, history becomes a living, vital thing, and Carthage, a community almost microscopic in size, takes on the allure of the celebrated city of the same name in ancient times.*

*As a bond between the present and the past, between the Rochester of today and the small parcel of it that was the Carthage of yesterday, Mr. Hooker's address is a proud souvenir of the Genesee dinner of 1933, which in the years to come will be read and re-read with affection and appreciation for that revered bit of country to which this Society has dedicated its existence.*

—LOUIS WILEY

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# Memories of Carthage: Traffic on Early Waterways

By ELON HUNTINGTON HOOKER



**O**NLY one whose memories hark back to childhood scenes among native trees, rocks and glens can appreciate the pleasure I feel in reviewing the early history of this ancient town of Carthage whose pioneers we commemorate:

"Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,  
Who never to himself hath said,  
'This is my own, my native land'!"

Near this memorial on the east was Emerson's Ice Pond, rich with boyhood memories of water transportation on elaborately constructed rafts. There we used to skate in winter, and spend our after-school hours and summer holidays building and racing miniature yachts. The strings of perch and bullheads carried home from the pond were famous.

Up the river, half way to the Falls, stood old No. 8 School, where, as boys, we learned the "Three R's." Behind it on the river cliff was my slate quarry where, as a boy of ten, I used to work after school, mining slate pencils and slates to transport them over an intricate railroad system whose cars were blocks of wood with spools for smoke-stacks. I remember, as if it were yesterday, looking up from my engineering work in the quarry to the roots of an overhanging tree on the bank of the gorge where an escaped prisoner in convict stripes had concealed himself, underneath, from the officers hot on his trail. The heart of a boy of my age went out to the under dog and no amount of questioning by the police, who soon surrounded the spot, could elicit any information from me. Today, I suppose, we grown-ups, with a more conventional sense of responsibility to society would help the police, but not so the boy.

A very wise man said to me once: "If a boy is not a socialist before he is thirty, there is something the matter with his

heart. If a socialist after he is thirty, there is something wrong with his head."

It was considered a great achievement to skate down the river from Carthage to the lake and back after school and before dark. As the gloom of night descended and ancient stories of wolves on the ice crowded upon us, who shall be blamed if strokes quickened and anxious looks were cast behind as ominous cracks resounded down the dark expanse of ice?

How wonderful to feel that there is some beautiful place in this perplexed and driven world of today whose every nook and cranny you have explored and know as does no one else, that you have in boyhood made your very own!

Down beside the River Indian Trail lies a great inclined rock with a cave behind it. For years this was called "Hooker's Rock," for there beside his campfire, we found my older brother, Albert, who had run away for two days from home's humdrum lack of adventure.

And how the romance grows when such a childhood spot has become part of a great city, which in the march of time becomes chosen, as Rochester was, out of this broad land, by impartial observers as the place best endowed by gifts of nature and development of its human factors to be the arena for a forward-looking experiment in civilization.

#### ADVANCE OF SCIENCE

Our world has moved fast since the early Carthage days to which we shall revert and yet this very scientific progress ties us in closer and closer with our past. Dr. Fairchild has outlined the geologic past of this valley and the interpretation of its rocks and hills.

For years the Smithsonian Institution has been conducting observations in the Andes upon the sun spots, attempting to connect their recurring cycles with weather conditions on this planet. Within the year, a Scandinavian observer, Ernest Antevs, studying the sedimentary deposits from ancient melting glaciers in his northern countries, in Germany, and later in New England, New York, and Canada, has found that the varying thickness of these deposits forms a record for thousands of years of the varying meteorological conditions. And now, a Professor from the University of Arizona, study-



ing the thickness of the tree rings and continuing his observations to the giant Redwoods of California, and to sections made of charcoal embers from the fires left by the Indians in the ancient pueblos of the Southwest, has detected again the occurrence of the same cycles, writing indelibly the weather characteristics for the last hundreds and even thousands of years. So gathered from different parts of the globe, science brings together these three contributions and we have, as never before, the ability to fix exactly in units of time epochs of human civilization whose location in the past has been wholly in the realm of conjecture.

It is wonderful to be living in an age when the earth's treasures and secrets of science are veritably laid at the foot of man, and nowhere are the normal fruits of this development more in evidence than in this fair city of Rochester. Their very presence here inspires us to a worthy guardianship. The challenge reaches every citizen of this Genesee Valley that here, in the wholesome life of its well-amalgamated people, shall be given a reproof by example to those extremists who, uninformed and ill-advised, would tear down or mutilate our institutions based on individualism for untried experiments in collectivism and invertebrate internationalism. Here, about this chasm of the Genesee, dramatic in its grandeur, and surpassed in the east only by Niagara, and in the smiling valleys of its upper reaches, began an epic story of American frontier life.

An interesting map of New York State shows a strip ten miles wide directly along the line of the Hudson River and the Barge Canal from New York to Buffalo, which contains ninety percent of the taxable valuation and eighty percent of the population of the State. It is over two centuries since the white man made his home here; and the result of his constructive endeavors, as indicated by this map, points clearly to the importance of water transportation and power in the development of this State.

#### WASHINGTON AND WATERWAYS

Just before resigning his commission as Commander-in-Chief of the Army in 1783, and while still waiting at Newburgh for the conclusion of peace, Washington explored the upper Hudson and Mohawk Valleys as the possible route for

a waterway and decided the most feasible was that afterward followed by the Erie Canal.

After returning to Mount Vernon, he renewed his attention to opening communications with the West through the Valley of the Potomac. East and West must be cemented together by interests in common, otherwise the two sections would break asunder. Washington set to work to establish that line of communication which has since grown into the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. After three years' work upon a constructive plan, he became President of the James River and Kanawha Canal Company. He had, himself, explored and mapped this route.

The confederation of the colonies was on its last legs. The war was ended, peace had come, and each colony was building its own fences without regard to the needs of the whole. International complications had begun to cloud the future, and Spain was closing the Mississippi to the western settlers. New England, with the exception of Rhode Island, was threatening to secede and form a nation by itself, while the southwestern settlers threatened to throw themselves on the protection of Great Britain—and the American Commonwealth was tottering. Just here the waterways projects of Washington started the mechanism which eventually saved this country for the future of the world. At his suggestion, in 1785, a Canal Commission met in conference at Mount Vernon and reached so satisfactory an agreement among the colonies to act in concert about their waterways that the machinery was set in motion which resulted in the Constitutional Convention of 1787, and the beginning of the United States as a nation.

A diary of the time, records Washington's despondency at the wrangling of selfish interests which were there shown. Finally, the Connecticut delegates succeeded in introducing the famous Connecticut Compromise. They were Roger Sherman and Oliver Ellsworth.

The southern colonies had large area and very little population. The northern colonies had many people and very little area. Each wanted to control, the southerners feeling they had Washington, Madison, the Tylers, and other leaders of thought and that they were really the brains of the new organization. The New Englanders were not at all willing

to take second place. Eventually, they were about to give up the formation of the Republic entirely. The suggestion, then, of Roger Sherman that they compromise on the basis of the Connecticut Constitution with an Upper House representing area, and a Lower House representing population, solved the problem. This, of course, is reflected today in our Senate and House of Representatives at Washington.

Waterways and water transportation have played an epic part in the formation of our nation and its development, as well as in the State of New York. There were four old Indian trails over the Appalachian Mountains reaching out into the west. One passed through southern Pennsylvania and the Alleghanies; another descended into the Monongahela; another went up through the Hudson and Mohawk Valleys and down again into the Monongahela; while the fourth went up through the Hudson and Mohawk valleys out to Oswego and on toward Niagara. It was this latter line which appealed first to Washington as a logical canal route.

I have touched on this early waterway development to show how vitally in those days, as even in ours, the unfolding of the nation depends upon the solution of its transportation problems.

#### TRANSPORTATION

We are having a part also in the dedication of this great Ridge Road Bridge—a permanent structure in stone and concrete appropriately fitting its nobility of line and curve into one of the grandest settings nature has vouchsafed to man east of the Rockies.

As the portage around Niagara Falls developed by the French and then by the British followed the early transport route of the Indians, so the transfer around the Genesee Falls and shipping down the river at Carthage, and through the Great Lakes, was the outlet for the substantial white settlement at Canandaigua for its exports to Canada, as it had been for the Canandaigua Indian war parties of the Iroquois in the earlier days through Irondequoit Bay. It was this urge of transportation and shipping which brought the pioneers to Carthage; and throughout its separate life, its citizens bore a distinct flavor of the sea, or were allied with shipping interests.

Dr. Fairchild has pictured this country in terms of geologic time. It is but yesterday when Champlain erected the first European hut on the St. Lawrence River at Quebec in 1608. The Pilgrims arrived in 1620 and the Puritans in 1629, three hundred years ago, cementing England's claims to American possessions.

New York State is penetrated by rivers. Our battlefields touch the principal commercial and military valleys on the eastern slope of the continent. The latter have a background of from two to three hundred years of occupancy and settlement. Albany (1617), next to Jamestown, Virginia (1607), and St. Augustine (1565), is the oldest settlement in the Union, if the thirteen colonies only are included. The oldest settlement of the Indians in this section of which we have record, is contemporary with the settlement of Albany in 1617.

#### FRENCH PENETRATION

In 1669, LaSalle, a Frenchman of twenty-six, led nine canoes through the St. Lawrence to Irondequoit Bay, where the Senecas invited him to their village, eighteen miles south on the Sheldon farm, near Rochester Junction. With a young chief Indian guide, he explored the mouth of the Genesee River and then passed on to the Niagara River. Western New York was then claimed as part of Canada, or New France. In 1670, Count Frontenac, Governor of New France, explored the St. Lawrence, erected block houses where Kingston stands, across Lake Ontario, and ten years later, with Indian allies, crossed Lake Ontario, and disembarked at the Oswego River. In 1678, the French established a trading post at Niagara, and in 1687, replaced this palisaded work with a small fort with four bastions.

The Genesee Country was then inhabited by the Senecas—the most numerous of the Six Nations. The Iroquois seemed then to have about 2000 warriors. In 1687, the French Commandant, Marquis de Denonville, undertook a punitive expedition against the Seneca Indians, which has been called one of the stupidest mistakes France ever made. From it dated bloody reprisals by the Iroquois, and the complete cementing of their friendship with the English. This expedition cost the French the fur trade and was very influential in the final destruction of French power in America.

In 1725, the French had constructed a larger fort at Niagara. No one spot in North America exerted a greater influence in peace or war than the few acres then enclosed in the old fort. A year later, the English Governor, Burnet, built a fort at Oswego and a public storehouse at Irondequoit Bay. About this time, King George II of England granted 600,000 acres bordering the Ohio River to a group of British capitalists. This area was also claimed by France. Western New York lay in the path of warring factions.

The importance of reducing Fort Niagara, which barred the English from the great western fur trade; of depriving the French of the support of their Indian allies including the powerful western tribes; and of securing unmolested the waters of Lake Ontario, hastened the English hostilities. The Oswego fortifications were reinforced and defended, and in 1755, Colonel Edward Braddock was recalled from Gibraltar and sent to aid the American Colonists.

The Genesee Country had now become a theatre of war between England and France. The fate of the North American continent was bound up with the favor of the Iroquois, "People of the Longhouse," whose front door opened on the Hudson River and the back door on the Falls of Niagara.

The French, from the time of Denonville, were less successful than the English in winning the confidence of the Indians.

The result was that the French were gradually driven North with the help of the Iroquois. Even though Washington, as a young man, took part in Braddock's unsuccessful expedition to crush the French and their Indian allies at Fort Duquesne (the site of Pittsburgh), gradually the Iroquois became British allies and eventually fought against the Colonists in the War of the Revolution. There is little doubt that the brave but wholly incompetent fighting in the open by Braddock's Army against the French and Indians concealed in the woods and rocks, first showed young Washington and his Virginia Colonists that the British could be defeated by a Colonial Army.

#### THE GENESEE COUNTRY

After the Revolution, the Genesee Country remained a forest primeval, the home of the Senecas, bordering the lake and Irondequoit Bay, its glorious river and cataracts reach-

ing back into the rich valley above, with villages and corn-fields of the Indians, and their canoes following the water-courses.

In 1783, when the Treaty of Paris was signed between the English and the American Colonists, closing the Revolution, there was a white population of 190,000 and 17,000 Indians in the entire State of New York. The white population was concentrated along a narrow strip of the lower Mohawk, the Hudson River and Long Island, hardly one-tenth of the total area of the state. Nevertheless, there were eleven whites to one Indian. All the western part of the state was Indian territory, held as hereditary lands, and by treaty and population. There were only about 1075 whites in the whole Genesee Country, practically fifteen Indians to one white.

The Forts at Ogdensburg, Oswego, and Niagara, were still held by the British, who refused to withdraw these outposts, pending the settlement of minor details with the Americans. The only portion of this vast region, which was not under Indian control, was the Fort at Niagara, and the narrow strip on the lower strait of Niagara from Gill Creek to Four Mile Creek, taken from the Senecas by Sir William Johnson, in 1763, in retaliation for the Devil's Hole Massacre.

Canandaigua was the only trading-post in this territory prior to 1788, when the Phelps and Gorham's purchase took place. The British were moving both Loyalists and Indians rapidly to the Canadian side to build up Niagara-on-the-Lake, and the towns extending up to Ft. Erie. All transportation was moved to the Canadian shore.

On the American side, as far as the Genesee River, all was wilderness, with no inhabitants except the Indians, who were being moved to the Canadian allotment. In 1669 one hundred years earlier, LaSalle had first landed below the Falls at Niagara. By 1788, the "Magazin Royal" of John Caer, built at this spot in 1720, marking the beginning of French occupancy, had disappeared, but the boat carry up the hill was still there, fast going to ruin. By 1798, the French had turned over Fort Niagara.

The Revolutionary Army under Sullivan enters the scene to chastise the murderous Senecas who had been fighting with the British. There were no white settlements in this part of the State; but Sullivan's soldiers in burning the



Seneca villages, and driving westward the Indian warriors, had recognized the beauty, fertility, and desirability of the land.

Upon returning to their homes in the east Sullivan's soldiers reported what they had seen. Land companies were formed in Connecticut and Massachusetts, and inducements were held out to the farmers of the east to exchange their stony farms for the rich lands of the Genesee Country. There followed the Phelps and Gorham's purchase and a great inrush of settlers, mainly from Connecticut and Massachusetts.

It was in the year 1789 that Indian Allen built the first mills at the Genesee Falls, on the One-Hundred-Acre Tract given him by Phelps and Gorham. His grist-mill was a make-shift affair, yet it marks the beginning of civilization in this wilderness. Speculators began investing in the Genesee Lands with the expectation of profit, and pioneers entered who believed in the fertility of the soil.

The Colony of Massachusetts, by its Charter, claimed all the territory between its north and south boundaries from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Under Royal Grant to the Duke of York, the State of New York claimed sovereignty over this same territory. In 1786, these claims were adjusted at Hartford, Connecticut.

#### PHELPS AND GORHAM'S PURCHASE

In 1788, Massachusetts agreed to sell 6,000,000 of these acres to Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham on condition that the Indian title should be bought. The payment was in script below par, but the campaign of George Washington and Alexander Hamilton against repudiation of debts by the states, resulted in their assumption as a national debt. The resultant rise in the value of the script made it impossible for Phelps and Gorham to consummate more than one-third of the original purchase; to this they had already extinguished the Indian title. It was conveyed to them in 1788, and embraced Ontario, Steuben, and Yates Counties; and parts of Monroe, Wayne, Livingston, Allegheny, and Schuyler. This is what is commonly known as the "Phelps and Gorham's Purchase." The remaining two-thirds, or 4,000,000 acres reverted to Massachusetts two years later.

In 1790, Oliver Phelps sold most of this 2,000,000 acres to

Robert Morris, of New Jersey, and almost immediately he sold the lands to an English syndicate headed by Sir William Pulteney, father of the Countess of Bath. He chose Charles Williamson of England as their agent. When Captain Williamson saw the fertile soil, with its vast wealth of timber, sales to individuals increased in spite of the fact that there were no bridges, no means of communication and no markets for the produce, which consisted of furs and gin-seng.

Well-worn Indian trails from twelve to eighteen inches in width followed the present general route of the Barge Canal and the New York Central R. R. They were frequented by fur trappers and savages on their way to and from the trading-posts of the east. The Ontario trail from Oswego came on to the Ridge Road at Irondequoit Bay and continued to Niagara River.

In 1794, Captain Williamson stated that there was not a road within one hundred miles of the Genesee Country that would admit of any sort of conveyance other than on horseback or on a sled when the ground was covered with snow. At this time the Genesee Country was a wilderness and the far-western frontier of America.

The road from the Genesee to Canandaigua was only an Indian path. On this road there were but two families. Canandaigua now consisted of two small frame houses and a few huts. Some came into this section by water, others came on horseback or afoot over the numerous Indian trails. The country was so wild and unsettled that travel at that period was dangerous. Almost anything might happen from rough bands of Indians, and the white outlaws, who lived in the Indian lands.

Between 1796 and 1810, pioneers, mostly from Connecticut, moved into this country. In 1799, stages were put on the new road from Utica to the Genesee.

When, later, the English syndicate divided up their holdings, John Greig of Canandaigua, in 1806, succeeded to the agency of the Hornby lands. He forms the connecting link between the wilderness of the past and the ambitious Carthage about to be born. Mr. Greig remained the law partner of Judge Howell until 1820, and when Lafayette visited the country, in 1824, he was entertained by John Greig in his own home at Canandaigua. In 1830, Mr. Greig visited Lafayette at



Paris and was received by the King. He was prominent in all large business affairs of the region and seems to have obtained the confidence of the Indians. One of his first law cases as District Attorney found him opposed, in the Canandaigua Court House, to Peter B. Porter and Red Jacket, the famous Iroquois leader.

#### NIAGARA TRANSPORT

During the period from 1805 to 1810, these western lands were sold. Barton and Porter, of Niagara, acquired their full share from Lewiston to Black Rock. They revived and created a new transport system. When Elisha Strong, fresh from Yale, visited Niagara, in 1809, there was great commercial activity along the Niagara carry, largely due to Barton and the Porters. Imbued with the pioneer spirit and inspired by what he saw at Niagara, he entered the law office of John Greig at Canandaigua.

In 1771, Canandaigua combined an important Indian village and a stopping and trading point. By 1800, it had again become the metropolis of Western New York. Land titles were fairly clear, and the sale of farm lands was under way. At the Niagara escarpment at Lewiston, there stands today the home of the grandchildren of Benjamin Barton, and the home of the grandson of Augustus Porter, the pioneer surveyor of this region. In Mr. Porter's front yard is the large stone urn from the lawn of "Greig Hall" at Canandaigua, descending by inheritance from John Greig.

#### CARTHAGE LAND COMPANY

Elisha B. Strong graduated from Yale in 1809, and after visiting Niagara Falls and studying law with Howell and Greig in Canandaigua, was admitted to the Bar. In 1812, he returned to Windsor, Connecticut, and married Dolly Hooker, sister of Alexander and Horace Hooker. He returned with his bride to Canandaigua, and opened a law office with William H. Adams, in 1813.

At the wedding, Alexander Hooker was twenty-four years old, and Horace Hooker nineteen years old, and to them their new brother-in-law recounted the surroundings of Canandaigua and the land developed there. In 1816, Alexander and Horace Hooker followed him to Canandaigua, where,

under the advice of Elisha Strong and John Greig, they undertook a country store at Bristol near Canandaigua.

In 1817, Elisha Strong formed a land company with Herman Norton of New York City and Elisha Beach of Bloomfield, and that same year purchased Caleb Lyon's farm at the lower Genesee Falls, and laid out the village of Carthage. Alexander Allan Hooker became the Phelps and Gorham agent in Irondequoit on the old Merchant's Road from Canandaigua to Hanford's Landing.

It is interesting to note that Judge Strong and Horace Hooker were both attracted by water transportation; and Horace Hooker especially was imbued with the spirit of his forebears at Hartford, who were shipping merchants on the high seas in the China and far-eastern trade. Porter and Barton obtained the dock and transport lease for Niagara from the State in 1805, and were doing a thriving business by 1812. Horace Hooker was about seven years younger than his sister and Judge Strong and was about twenty-eight years old when he married Helen Wolcott of Windsor, Conn., and brought her to Carthage.

It is easy to believe that the canny Scott, John Greig, made the suggestions that motivated the Porters and Bartons in their transport development at Lewiston, the planning of a village one mile square to take care of the population and traffic of this commerce, and the carrying through of the Ridge Road, with Lewiston as the Niagara terminal at one end, and Hanford's Landing on the Genesee at the other; and likewise the transport system of Horace Hooker and Judge Strong at the Genesee carry. What Elisha Strong saw of Porter's and Barton's progress in Niagara transportation, undoubtedly inspired the laying out of the industrial village at Carthage, then a wilderness, but the head of navigation on the Genesee River.

This village was planned in Canandaigua, and built on the banks of the Genesee, at the crossing of the Great Ridge, or Lewiston Road as it was then called, and is now called in Rochester as it passes Eastman Park. This Genesee crossing is now completed by this great Ridge Road Bridge.

Commerce started in this neighborhood in 1726, by the establishment of an English station at Irondequoit to secure the Indian trade. In 1796, the first permanent settlement

had been made by Gideon King and Zadock Granger at what, later, was Hanford's Landing.

Canandaigua merchants, about 1804, cut the Merchant's Road to the mouth of the Genesee. The eastern travelers came over this route and those going to Carthage picked their way up the river from its mouth. Carthage Landing was the head of navigation from Lake Ontario on the Genesee River. An Indian trail led up the east side of the river to Mount Hope. This was the principal channel of communication with the interior. Along this path came Hosea Rogers' father. He found several families of white squatters in Carthage but they disappeared when actual settlers arrived.

Caleb Lyon, of Lewis County, commenced clearing the land at Carthage before 1809. From him Hosea Rogers' father bought the land where the Deaf Mute Institute now stands. His log house was built on the east side of the Indian trail, where Delos Polley later lived on North St. Paul Street, immediately opposite old Number 8 school building. Walnut trees, still standing, were preserved when the land was cleared.

The cabin was of unhewn logs, with two small square windows of glass and a huge fireplace. The floor was at first split logs but, later, was laid with rough boards from the mill at the Upper Falls. Here, in 1812, Hosea Rogers was born.

Captain Hosea Rogers, pioneer boat builder, lake sailor, and business man, died at his home on St. Paul Street, Irondequoit, in 1904, at the age of ninety-three. He was a prominent citizen and one of the oldest pioneers of Monroe County, who saw Rochester grow from a wilderness village to a city.

There was no clearing between Carthage and the mouth of the River. The Indians camped on the Mill Flats and around Norton Creek, later Emerson's Ice Pond. My father recollected having bow and arrow contests with them even in his day.

In what was called the Osage lot, adjoining Emerson's Ice Pond, in my youth, we frequently found Indian arrowheads and tomahawks. The Indians from time immemorial had a clearing of about ten acres on the Wilson farm on Norton Street, where they continued to plant corn every year, although their homes were in the Seneca district. There were

many Indian encampments along the sunny slope where later stood the homes of Ethan Chase, H. N. Peck, the Huntington mansion and others.

Before 1816, Hanford's Landing was the principal dock; but Carthage, a mile further up the river, was free from fevers and became the popular landing.

Although Caleb Lyon had had a survey made by Joseph Gilbert before 1816, the real pioneer or "patroon" of Carthage was Elisha B. Strong of Windsor, Connecticut. Caleb Lyon began substantial improvements at Carthage in 1816, but he appears to have lacked means or ability for in 1818, he sold 1000 acres at Carthage to Elisha B. Strong, Elisha Beach, and Heman Norton. Strong became the executive officer of the company.

The new proprietors began the development with energy and, other things being equal, would inevitably have established the center of population at Carthage. A new map of Carthage was made for Strong and Company by Elisha Johnson in 1817, and about a year later the local name of Carthage was changed to Clyde, and a post office was opened there.

Three stores were erected on St. Paul Street, just north of the school house. Oliver Strong and Oliver Kimball opened business there, and Abner Burbank later, kept the North store. Elisha Strong built a gristmill and also a sawmill on the Fall Flats just above the Lower Falls and erected a residence for himself on St. Paul Street opposite the present camera plant. His house exists today.

The first steamboat to touch at the Port of Genesee, was the *Ontario*, in 1817. The first school was set up in 1817, by the taxpayers of Carthage, and was called Number 8. It was located on Beach Street, but Judge Strong, later, gave a lot on the river bank where now is Seneca Park.

About 1817, when James Dowling arrived from Ireland, there was no sign of human habitation between Carthage and Main Street, Rochesterville, except a deserted miller's shed on what became later Falls Field. In those days there was constant fear of rattlesnakes whose dens were at the Lower Falls. They curled up in the paths and on the timbers. The teamsters drove yokes of oxen drawing heavy loads over the unbroken forest road from Hanford's Landing. There was a

reward of ten dollars for the hides of bears and wolves, and men made a living killing rattlesnakes for a bounty of three cents. The locality was then famous for game. Deer, wolves, and wildcats abounded, and bears were numerous.

The pioneers in this country were stricken with fever and ague and often whole communities were laid low. Bears killed their hogs, wolves ate their flocks and howled in packs, so that, as early as 1802, \$1,000 was raised for wolf bounties in old Northampton, which comprised all that section west of the Genesee River. One thousand dollars was a tremendous sum for those days. First the head and entire skin of a wolf had to be taken to a Justice in order to get a certificate of three dollars. Later, the bounty was five dollars for the ears of a wolf. Rattlesnakes, if they be killed within half a mile of town, came to one dollar per dozen for bounty. Salmon ran up the river to the Lower Falls and were taken in scoop nets. Catfish, weighing fifteen to twenty pounds were caught on night lines. In April and May, the sturgeon came up the river and, sometimes, weighed one hundred fifty pounds.

#### SHIPPING ON THE GENESEE

There was considerable shipping on the Genesee River at a very early period. The first vessel built on the river was the *Jemima*, a schooner of fifty tons, built at King's Landing in 1797. It was the first American vessel built on Lake Ontario waters after the Revolutionary War. The timber for the vessel was cut in the woods along St. Paul Street. The carpenters took whatever suited them, as the owners of the land were only too glad to get rid of the trees.

It was seldom a boat could sail up and down the Genesee River without assistance from the shore. There was an Indian trail at the water's edge along the east side of the river from its mouth to the Lower Falls. The first vessels were towed up and down the stream by men walking in the Indian path. Finally, this was widened and animals took their place. After 1830, packets were towed from the Carthage warehouse opposite Charlotte, and back, to connect with the horse railroad from Rochester.

The Genesee River was made a port of entry in 1805. In 1810, three schooners of Ogdensburg ran between there and

the Niagara River, stopping alternately once in two weeks at the Genesee River. One of them was built on the Genesee near Charlotte and the same year another boat was built there. In 1818, there were sixty vessels on Lake Ontario, and in 1821, about one hundred fifty. There stood at the mouth of the river a great elm tree called the "Pilot Tree" used by the mariners of the lake to mark the entrance of the Genesee River, up to 1837.

A Carthage tavern on the corner of Norton and St. Paul Streets, known for fifty years as Green's Tavern, was said to be older than any house in Rochester. In 1819, Captain Ebenezer Spear opened this place. He was a sailor as were most of the succeeding landlords. The shipping to and from the Landing, and the hauling of logs and lumber from the woods, created an immense amount of teaming. The hotel business increased, and for years it was one of the most widely known and profitable public houses of the Genesee Valley, the receipts averaging over one hundred dollars a day.

Trade with Canada, after the War of 1812, grew rapidly from a few hundred barrels of flour in 1815, increasing in a few years to hundreds of thousands.

Rochesterville was first settled permanently in 1812. In 1814, the first mercantile operations and the first purchase of produce from the surrounding country took place there. In 1818, the exports down the Genesee River amounted to \$380,000; in 1819, \$400,000; in 1821, \$381,000; in 1822, \$500,000; and by 1833, over \$800,000. There was a large amount of grain purchased and stored in warehouses along the banks of the Upper River and shipped to Rochester by the old bateau system. This in turn came down through Carthage to Canada.

Captain John T. Trowbridge, an old salt-water sailor, and man of means, came to Oswego in 1818, and shortly after began ship building at Carthage. He also built warehouses and steamboats. He lived in the Clarke house, and afterward built houses for Roswell Hart, Judge Palmer and, later, the General Brinker place. Warham Strong, Elisha Strong's brother, built the Martin Galusha house on Gorham Street in 1822. He afterward built the Elwood, or Corning house, in St. Paul Street.

In 1812, the first bridge was erected at Rochesterville, and



in 1813, the legislature granted \$5,000 for cutting a roadway and bridging the streams on the Ridge Road from the Genesee River to Lewiston. In 1815, Samuel Hildreth ran a stage and carried mail twice a week between Canandaigua and Rochesterville. In 1816, investigation was made as to the expediency of a post route from Canandaigua by way of Rochesterville to Lewiston. These roads were through the forest primeval, the swampy places crossed by corduroy of logs; yet long strings of teams going from, and coming to, Utica and Albany, especially in the winter time when going was best, were sights as common as the railroad trains today.

Horace Hooker brought his bride to Carthage in 1821. They lived three months in the Clarke house and then he moved to a house next door to Judge Strong's home, where he lived most of his life, in a house first built for Elisha Beach. Mr. Hooker bought the Strong and Albright mill and went into the milling business. Amos Chipman, the miller at the Old Red mill, run by the Elys and Josiah Bissell at Rochesterville, came to the Carthage mill, preferring to go to the head of navigation where the larger town would probably be built. Mr. Hooker purchased the Trowbridge ware house and inclined railroad at Carthage Landing and, later, owned schooners on the lake, and mills, at Ogdensburg.

In 1820, Myron Holley helped to establish the route of the Erie Canal, and Governor Clinton's engineers felt obviously constrained by the depth of the gorge to cross the Genesee River with the aqueduct at Rochesterville instead of at Carthage.

#### ERIE CANAL

There is a tradition that Elisha B. Strong did not want his beautiful city of Carthage spoiled by the "Big Ditch." That he accepted the location and the future city at Rochester, is demonstrated by the fact that he was the first man mentioned on the committee to go to New York at the time of the Grand Erie Canal celebration. In 1819 and 1820, he was a member of the State Legislature, and became the first Judge of Monroe County, with Timothy Barnard, Levi Clark and John Bowman, associate Judges.

After the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, manufacturing supremacy was reluctantly conceded to Rochester; but

Carthage had by no means lost her enterprise. The Erie Canal increased rather than diminished the trade with Canada, and a new and flourishing era dawned upon Rochester and all the rich and prosperous Genesee Country. A flood of immigration poured in. Two new mills were erected on the Flats at Carthage, one by Francis Babcock, who built the fine residence known as the H. N. Peck house.

Nathaniel Fenn was proprietor of the Fenn House called the "Steamboat Hotel." Later, the building was used as a laundry by the Deaf Mute Institute and it was torn down in 1930. Fenn built a staircase down to the river behind his place, and ran a packet for passengers from there to the lake.

It was in a Carthage blacksmith shop that the famous Parkes axes were made.

In 1825, a small stern-wheel steamer, on the upper Genesee River, ran between Geneseo and Rochester for the use of passengers, freight and the towing of freight-boats loaded with grain accumulated along the banks of the rich valley. It did not pay its way, however, and was discontinued. Passengers were transported from the Four Corners of Rochester to the Rapids in carryalls.

After its opening in 1825, the Erie Canal became the great highway of travel. The swift packet-boats made eighty miles in twenty-four hours. In 1826, there were no less than one hundred sixty canal boats drawn by one hundred eighty-two horses, owned by persons actually residing in the village of Rochester. In 1827, there was not a single grown person who was born there out of the 8,000 inhabitants of the village; the oldest native not being then seventeen years old.

Between Carthage and Rochesterville there was a district called Dublin, settled largely by Irishmen who followed Dowling there in 1817. Its center was about opposite the Upper Falls. Dublin was famous for its pretty girls and fighting boys. To reach Rochesterville, the Carthage boys must ordinarily fight their way through and they always went in groups. Between the Dublinites and their opponents there was nevertheless much boyhood love and loyalty which extended to the Carthage names of O'Donald, Seth and Monroe Green, Hosea Rogers, Porter, Farley, Conkey, Polley, Simpson, Peck, Hooker, Gay, Huntington and Brewer.

About 1825, the Rogers brothers built the schooner,



"*Jeanette*," at Carthage Landing. In 1830, she was one of the first boats to pass to Lake Erie through the Welland Canal, which had just been opened. In 1831 and 1832, the Rogers brothers built three more schooners at Carthage Landing. In 1834, there were between sixty and seventy buildings at Carthage. Charlotte was called the Port of Genesee. Deputy Collector, Henry O'Reilly, resided at Carthage Landing.

#### CARTHAGE RAILROAD

Something better than a corduroy road between Carthage Landing and the Erie Canal was needed. A horse-railroad three miles long, costing \$30,000 was projected by a company in 1831. John Greig was President, and Hooker and Company were the lessees. The cars were constructed like coaches, the driver's seat on top, where there was a platform with a double seat through the center. The magnificent view down the river made it a favorite ride for visitors.

It was a curious get-up, being a stage coach drawn on a wooden track by two horses driven tandem. All travelers hurried to board this conveyance when they heard the signal blast from an A-flat horn. At a breakneck speed of ten miles an hour they were rushed to Carthage, where the boat landing was. By means of a gravity-railroad, consisting of a double track on trestle work, one car loaded with freight came up while the other went down loaded with passengers or freight. A small packet was towed by horses from Carthage Landing to the mouth of the river.

This railroad started on South Water Street, near the mill at the Aqueduct, and ran along the river bank to Andrews Street, where it diverged along the west side of St. Paul Street to a point below Lowell Street, again diverging toward the bank, to run along the crest of the gorge to Carthage, connecting with the inclined railway.

I remember, as a boy, seeing a circular, ring-shaped mound on the bank of the river in Huntington Grove which, almost obliterated by the passage of time, represented a turntable of this old horse-railroad; and in our barn, for years, was a mechanical device which had been used for operating the turntable.

Five steamboats touched ten times a week at the Carthage

Landing. There were few mills in Canada in those days, and most of the Canadian wheat was brought here to be ground, and sent back as flour. Much leather was shipped from here and, later, large tanneries were built at Carthage Landing. There was another inclined railroad at the Mill Flats.

There were three taverns at Carthage Landing, one at the dock and two at the top of the hill. The Pavilion House, on the dock, was kept by Adonijah Green. When this was burned he moved into the inn at the corner of Norton and St. Paul Streets. He was City Assessor in 1853, and the father of famous sons. One of them, Seth Green, developed the first practical fish-hatchery, and conveyed the first shad ever taken to California. He received recognition and awards from France and Germany, and collaborated with Robert B. Roosevelt in writing the book, *Fish Hatching and Fish Catching*.

C. H. Green ran the horse-railroad, and was agent for the steamboats, *Oswego*, *William Avery*, *United States*, *America*, and *Constitution*, all of which came regularly to Carthage Landing.

#### BUSINESS AT CARTHAGE

By 1827, Judge Strong had been elected President of the first bank in Rochester and seemed to have turned his energies to that village. By 1830, the Carthage stores and post-office had been abandoned, and the post-office became a family school for the Strong and Hooker children. Mr. Hooker added to his homestead ninety acres of village lots, as well as a farm of four hundred acres in Irondequoit. In the railroad days, Mr. Hooker's bookkeeper, Mr. Lyman, was murdered while his employer was away buying wheat. He had received several thousand dollars after the banks closed, and was robbed and murdered after leaving the railroad station.

In 1836, Martin Galusha came to Rochester and resided at the corner of Andrews and St. Paul Streets. He bought the tract of land in Dublin between Gorham and Lowell Streets. The latter street he named after the manufacturing town in Massachusetts, for the mills on the river flats and banks were multiplying so rapidly. The beautiful, quaint, old home in which he lived, built by Warham Strong, was standing a few

years ago. George Newell also was an early settler who erected a large manufactory for frames and mouldings on Gorham Street. He was later Commodore of the Rochester Yacht Club, and as a boy, I used to sail with him on the lakes from Carthage Landing, earning my passage by strenuous labors on the boat after school was over.

In May or June, 1834, Hosea Rogers sailed with Mr. Bunnell of the firm of Hooker and Bunnell of Carthage, to Detroit, to open a store. He then cleared for Chicago, which was a frontier town, where old Fort Dearborn commanded the mouth of the creek, and Indians were as numerous as white people. About 1840, he began a business of building vessels at Carthage Landing. The anchor of his first vessel, I remember often seeing in front of his house where it stood for many years as a hitching-post. He built vessels for thirty years. In all about fourteen, some at Carthage Landing and some at the mouth of the river.

By 1838, travelers to and from Niagara Falls could travel by canal packets or lake steamboats, by stages on the Ridge Road, or by railroad between Rochester and Batavia, connecting by a short stage with Lockport, and by railroad to Lewiston. About 1838, steamboats were arriving and departing almost daily from the mouth of the Genesee for different points on the lake.

The first warehouse built at this point for lake trade was erected, in 1828, by Levi Ward, Jr., Elisha Strong, Levi Clark and Heman Norton. Captain John Trowbridge and others were formerly in business here, but later the two principal warehouses were owned by Hooker, Armistead, and Griffiths.

Carthage was interested in whatever improvements were made at the rapids of the St. Lawrence or around the Falls of Niagara, for their steamboats and schooners thus had direct intercourse between Rochester and the shores of the Upper Lakes, or the cities of the St. Lawrence, or through that river to the Atlantic Ocean.

In 1839, an eye witness saw seventeen vessels at one time lying at the Carthage Landing loading with flour for Montreal.

#### DECLINE OF CARTHAGE

The financial panic of 1837, was disastrous to Carthage,

and many of its important interests were sacrificed. There was a temporary revival of business in 1838, with a scheme to build a race from the Lower Falls to Carthage Landing. It was never carried out. The lease of the railroad was not renewed, the road was abandoned, and after this Carthage gave up the fight.

The promoters of Kelsey's Landing, on the west side of the river, had for years coveted the thriving business done at Carthage Landing. Finally, as Rochester developed, Buell Avenue was improved down to this landing and a warehouse with a grain elevator was built at the dock. Then a hotel was built, and an omnibus ran from the city to the dock. Carthage had indeed met her Waterloo. Kelsey's Landing kept the steamboat business until the New York Central Railroad to Charlotte was built.

Joseph Farley lived on the Holley farm at the corner of Ridge Road, and later moved into the Judge Strong place and went into the nursery business with Mr. Hooker, who gradually relinquished his commercial enterprises and began growing nursery stock on the ruins of Carthage. Afterward they left Carthage and moved their nursery to Brighton; and the Hooker home was sold to Joshua Conkey. It was in the early '40's that Elon Huntington purchased the farm on St. Paul Street where he afterward built his home.

The leading citizens of Carthage had very ambitious projects. They planned a bridge across Irondequoit Bay to link up the east and the west ends of the Ridge Road. At Sodus, where the Ridge ended, an incorporated turnpike would continue to Rome; and the distance between Utica and Niagara Falls would be thirty miles less than by the Seneca turnpike across the bridge at Avon. These plans never materialized.

#### RIDGE ROAD

The Ridge Road was an early mail route, a natural highway to Niagara. Sir William Johnson traveled the Ridge on his way to Fort Niagara in 1759. The road was used as a military highway west from the Genesee River to Lewiston. The soldiers from Fort Oswego and the east came to the mouth of the Genesee by boat. In the War of 1812, the Ridge was the main line of communication. In 1812, Levi

Ward induced Gideon Granger, the Postmaster General of the United States, to extend a weekly mail route from Canandaigua through Rochester along the Ridge Road to Oak Orchard Creek. He was given the postage of twenty or twenty-five cents a letter for acting as Deputy Postmaster. The first mail was carried through weekly on the Ridge by James Brown, on horseback. Soon stage coach companies started, and the mail went tri-weekly. Finally, in 1816, there was a daily line of mail stages each way.

#### CARTHAGE BRIDGES

The monumental stone arch bridge which now stands at the site of Carthage, carries the Ridge Road across the gorge of the Genesee River, and has renewed public interest in that ancient highway. A massive gorge requires a massive structure. Good architectural treatment calls for what is here achieved. Semicircular large, and smaller supporting arches of odd number. The result is a joy to see. Frank P. McKibben, the Consulting Engineer, has here realized his dream of "Poetry in Bridges."

A little over a hundred years ago, in 1819, every one in this vicinity was thinking about another celebrated bridge which carried traffic over this chasm at a point near the Lower Falls. A company, including Heman Norton, Elisha Beach, Elisha B. Strong, Levi H. Clark, Ebenezer Pete, Ebenezer Spear, and Francis Albright, was incorporated by the legislature to build this bridge. It was completed in 1819, at approximately the site of the present Driving Park Avenue Bridge. That bridge made Carthage famous. It consisted of a single wooden arch, which rested upon solid rock and rose precipitously one hundred and ninety-six feet above the water.

It was believed to be one of the boldest successful attempts in bridge-building in the country. The famous bridge at Schaffhausen, then standing, was only a few feet longer and lacked one hundred feet of being as high. It was described as "one of the wonders of the world," and was the pride and joy of Western New York. The weight of the timbers pressing unequally upon the arch, however, in time, threw up the center, causing the bridge literally to fall upward and then, tumble into the river below. It had stood fifteen months,

and the builders' guarantee of one year saved them from loss.

Next there was a bridge on the upper end of Carthage Flats connecting them with the Miller Flats. My father remembered hearing that stages crossed this bridge, and Moses King speaks of building a road down Deep Hollow. That might have been for the stages. There was a large inn at the top of the hill.

The fourth was a suspension bridge, built by the City of Rochester, and opened to the public in July, 1856. The height of span above the water was two hundred eight feet and it was erected slightly north of the site of the first Carthage bridge of 1819. Its cost was \$16,000. This suspension bridge could not support a heavy fall of snow which overloaded it and, after nine months, followed its predecessor into the bottom of the gorge. The construction engineer was Josiah Bissell, Jr., and by his friends it was called the "Bridge of Sighs."

#### MEN OF CARTHAGE

A famous citizen who owned a farm in Carthage was Hiram Sibley, born in North Adams, Massachusetts, in 1807, who migrated, at sixteen, to the Genesee Valley. Between 1840 and 1850, he became interested in the electric telegraph and, with Ezra Cornell, and others, consolidated the small existing telegraph companies into the Western Union. It is said that the first meeting for this consolidation was held in Carthage on the broad piazza of Elon Huntington's home.

Mr. Sibley was president of the Western Union for seventeen years, during which the value of the property grew from \$220,000 to \$48,000,000. On his own account, he built the telegraph lines to the Pacific and they were also a great success.

Then, Mr. Sibley projected a line to Europe by way of Behring Strait and Siberia, securing valuable franchises from Russia. The success of the submarine telegraph defeated this project, however, but the Nation was the gainer, for in the course of his conferences with the Prime Minister of Russia, he was authorized to convey to the American Government, Russia's willingness to sell Alaska. The message was delivered and the purchase consummated. He later joined with



Ezra Cornell in the founding of Cornell University, and undertook the building there of the Sibley College of Engineering. The many gifts to Rochester, and the notable public spirit of his family are familiar to all.

The group which started Carthage were obviously not small men with limited ideas. It was John Greig, of Howell and Greig, of Canandaigua, agents for this part of the Phelps and Gorham lands, who inspired Benjamin Barton, the master transportation man and merchant, of Porter, Barton, & Company, at the Niagara frontier.

It was John Greig again who sent Elisha Strong to see this transportation development at Niagara and, later, persuaded him and Horace Hooker to take up a similar enterprise at the Falls of the Genesee. He sent Alexander Allan Hooker as agent of the Phelps and Gorham lands to build on the Merchant's Road the house in which Professor Ryland M. Kendrick, one of his descendants, now lives. He encouraged Horace Hooker to join the land company of Elisha Strong.

Horace Hooker's part in the project was similar to that of Benjamin Barton's at Lewiston. His merchandising and shipping traditions, he brought with him from Windsor. Their adaptation to Western New York possibilities, he obtained from the example of Benjamin Barton at Lewiston.

It was John Greig who financed the railroad from the Erie Canal to the Hooker docks at Carthage, which railroad he leased to Horace Hooker. Carthage was to be the third port on Lake Ontario lying between Oswego and Niagara. To Strong, Beach and Norton fell the town and real estate development, while to Horace Hooker fell the industrial and transportation development of the project. It appears to have been the transportation phase that most largely interested John Greig.

On March 4, 1818, the leading men of Carthage addressed a Memorial to the President and Directors of the Bank of the United States urging the claims of their village over those of Rochesterville, their rival, for the establishment of a branch bank. The argument is modest but masterly:

"As respects the safety of a branch in this vicinity in relation to the comparative ability, prudence, capital, influence, and enterprise of the two villages, it becomes us not to speak, but we respectfully invite an investigation."

This document was signed by Levi H. Clark as Attorney, Elisha B. Strong, Elisha Beach, Heman Norton, and Horace Hooker, in that order, followed by others. From what we know of their activities, it would seem that these five men, or certainly the four men following the attorney, were the prime movers, following John Greig, in the conception and execution of the Carthage project.



# CARTHAGE

1809-1834

STOUT ARMS SUBDUED THE WILDERNESS AND BUILT  
CARTHAGE HERE.

AT THE RIVER'S BRINK HALTED THE OX-CARTS OF THE  
PIONEERS. CALEB LYON CAME FIRST,

1809: ELISHA B. STRONG AND OTHERS, 1816.

THE VILLAGE PLOT COVERED A THOUSAND ACRES FROM THE  
RIDGE SOUTH TO PRESENT CLIFFORD AVENUE, A MILE WIDE  
ALONG THE RIVER, WITH STATELY HOMES, MILLS,  
WAREHOUSES, SHIPYARDS.

CARTHAGE BECAME A CENTER OF COMMERCE WITH CANADA  
AND THE WEST. THE ANNUAL EXPORTS DOWN THE RIVER  
APPROACHED A MILLION DOLLARS. THE GORGE WAS SPANNED  
BY THE FAMOUS CARTHAGE BRIDGE, THE HIGHEST WOODEN  
ARCH EVER BUILT. WHEN ROCHESTER WAS INCORPORATED,  
1834, CARTHAGE WAS INCLUDED.

IN HONOR OF THE INSPIRING ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PEOPLE  
OF CARTHAGE THIS MEMORIAL IS DEDICATED.

ERECTED BY THE STATE OF NEW YORK, THE ROCHESTER  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY, AND IRONDEQUOIT CHAPTER, D. A. R.  
1932

*Wording of Bronze Memorial Tablet. Dedicated by Exercises held June 17,  
1932. Tablet designed and executed by Alphonse A. Kolb*





